494 left in a single load. As yet, though, the most important influence of the highway is the frequent bus service. The regular buses, connecting with buses for Guadalajara, and going directly to or from Morelia, and Mexico City, pass through to and from Uruapan about once an hour during the day. In addition, smaller buses from Uruapan to Purépero and Nahuatzen pass by several times a day. As a consequence, individual vendors often go to market by bus. Women take foodstuffs or herbs to Uruapan for the Sunday market regularly. Others may visit the market at Paracho merely as a recreation. Not a few in the village have made a trip or two to Mexico City.

556 Modern transport has even reached into Cherán itself. Three of the more well-to-do
494 men in the town have purchased a 1½-ton truck, which carries freight to Uruapan or Morelia at 1½ centavos a kilo. On Sundays it also operates as a "wildcat" (i.e., unlicensed) bus to Paracho. The fare is 25 centavos plus a charge for bulky bundles; for example, 20 centavos for three bundles of palm leaves. Although trucks are not supposed to carry
● [661] passengers, a satisfactory working arrangement has been made with the traffic police.

STOREKEEPERS

443 Cherán is unique among large Tarascan towns in that virtually all storekeepers are natives. A few of the storekeepers are large farmers whose families run a store on the side, but most of them made their start as storekeepers although they may now also be farmers. As one of the successful storekeepers explained, less capital is required to start a store than is needed to buy adequate farm lands. According to this same informant, if a man has fifty pesos, he can get a hundred pesos worth of goods, and if he has a place to operate, he is established in business. Moreover, the work is not as hard as farming. In addition, as people in Cherán have the same idea of living standards, business volume in most stores is small, so small that it is said not to have attracted the Mestizos.
[511] It is asserted that only those accustomed to Tarascan living standards and ways can succeed in making a living as a storekeeper in Cherán.

The more able storekeepers not only sell

632 ment, one to the State treasurer, and one to the
652 general accounting office of the State. The first two deal with income payable to Federal or State government, while the third deals with all the municipal accounts.

UNOFFICIAL ORGANIZATIONS

467 The functioning of government in Cherán is often affected by unofficial organizations and
665 informal groups. At the time of the study, the most influential of such groups was one affiliated with the CTM (*Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanas*). Probably this same group also functioned as a local branch of the official government party, the PRM (*Partido Revolucionario Mexicano*).

The actual functioning and organization of these groups was quite informal. Considerable difference of opinion existed in the town as to the desirability of such organizations, many holding that they are disruptive in character. Others, the so-called progressives, felt that such organization is necessary if the town is to receive its fair share of Government aid. Between these conflicting viewpoints could arise violent disagreement. With great reasonableness, however, the "progressives" organized only informally. Those who felt the town should be organized in the fashion mentioned, named officers and got themselves recognized by the State branch of the CTM. When documents arrive which need action or signature, the members of the group talk them over informally in house-to-house visits and send the necessary replies. There are no meetings or overt evidence of the organization. From the standpoint of union and party officials in the State capital, the town is organized; from the standpoint of the majority of the inhabitants of Cherán, it is not.

661 The development of this informal organiza-
579 tion grew out of another and earlier organization that had gotten the town a bad name. In 1940–41, within a short time any investigator soon heard of the *zafarrancho*, the disorder or riot. Evidently a landmark, many events were dated by reference to this affair. To learn about it, however, was not easy. Many people refused to talk about it at all; others suggested that it was unwise to talk about it. Only after many months was the story finally secured in

661 confidential talks, and even then it is doubtful whether all the details were abstracted from
579 unwilling witnesses. The story as learned does not seem to call for all the secrecy involved, and this gives weight to the suspicion that the truth of the underlying factors was not secured and that these factors are more operative today than anyone would admit.

At the height of the agrarian movement in Michoacán, the control of the *municipio* was secured by a group of some 30 men calling themselves "agrarians (*agraristas*)." Everyone seemed agreed that there was no genuine agrarian problem in Cherán and that the members of the group had no desire for land but only for power. Perpetuating themselves in office, members of this group at first were tolerated but gradually became more and more overbearing in their attitude. When people finally began to show signs of discontent, the "agrarians" asked the State authorities for aid on the grounds that the people were rebellious. As a result, a detachment of soldiers was stationed in Cherán under the command of a lieutenant to enforce order and the authority of the municipal officials. The young lieutenant apparently soon saw that his troops were perpetuating an illegal and unpopular group in power and tried to get his superiors to make a real investigation, but with no success. The tyranny of the ruling group now became unbearable.

The climax came when a drunken member of the group began firing his revolver on the main streets and threatening people. One of the soldiers endeavored to arrest the man and was shot and killed. The lieutenant now succeeded in having the situation thoroughly investigated, and as a result the detachment of soldiers was withdrawn. The following day occurred the *zafarrancho*. Some 10 to 12 of the "agrarians" were killed and the rest fled the town. In 1940, they were still living in exile in nearby towns.

664 For a time following this, Cherán was governed by a *presidente militar*, an appointed
665 army officer. Technically, this was true in
467 1940, but the commander rarely even visited the town and all troops had been removed some time before. The present "progressive" government has effectively been in power since the affair. This is also the group which has

582 587 aged 20. The instance is regarded as exceptional and as undesirable. As a rule, the boy discusses his choice with his parents or with
584 604 one of his uncles. Although no specific data could be secured on the subject, from the facts that boys at this age seem to be shy with their parents and that the bride is usually taken to the house of an uncle, it seems likely that uncles are consulted on matters of marriage more commonly than are the parents. Some stated there is no preference for maternal or paternal uncles in this connection; others said the girl is taken to a paternal uncle or, lacking an uncle, a paternal aunt.

After a girl is stolen, only on rare occasions
583 does the marriage not follow. Her parents,
522 however much opposed they may be, must always give their consent, for it is very difficult for girls to get married if they have been stolen and then returned home. As Agustín put it, "they have to wait for a sucker" in order to get married. A youth marrying such a girl is the butt of teasing by all his age mates, even by persons who do not even know his name. In the one case known of a young man who married a girl who had previously been stolen by someone else, the youth is subjected to so much teasing that he is virtually a recluse, either staying in his house when home or working by himself in the woods.

583 It is generally felt that the municipal authorities should force a youth to marry a girl after he has stolen her. If they do not, the authori-
[606] ties are always suspected of receiving bribes to overlook the case. Informants best acquainted with customary viewpoints, though, stated that the municipal authorities are not required to act unless the parents of the groom make the first formal visit to the girl's parents. In this case the municipal authorities are expected to force completion of the marriage. In actual fact the municipal authorities bring some pressure to bear on youths if the girl's parents lodge a complaint.

The following accounts of stealing girls give additional light on the procedures. The first account was written by Agustín Rangel.

When I first met the groom it was about 2 p. m. (on a Sunday) at the corner of Damas Gambe's store. We walked around for a while and when we were coming down the highway he told me he was going to steal a

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P.209] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro

423 The individual ejido is a turn back to small exploitation. No technological improvements have been made, no credit is received from the Ejido Bank, and in some cases corn for subsistence is now grown instead of a former commercial crop. Collective ejidos, on the contrary, are financed by the Ejido Bank and are under its ultimate control. This is a good example of the state intervention in production which characterizes the present development of world economy.

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175 As stated when discussing the decline of the Indian village community in Michoacan, at the time of the Mexican Revolution, a number of haciendas were near the Tarascan region. Some villages had lost most of their lands and included great numbers of landless people. However, this is not typical of Tarascan villages. Most of them were and are villages of farmer-owners and craftsmen. Although most Tarascans had not lost lands to haciendas, private ownership of land prevailed and there was within the village noticeable inequality in wealth. Relatively large, medium and small landowners, sharecroppers, and landless laborers were to be found. In some towns outsiders owned a considerable amount of land. Consequently, the agrarian aspects of the Mexican Revolution, i. e., the fight to get land from the haciendas, have been mainly external to most Tarascan villages, and the agrarian conflict caused by inequality within the village assumed here a peculiar form.

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[669] No good information is available as to the extent to which Tarascans participated in the armed conflicts, although some fought with agrarian revolutionists (Zapatistas and Villistas). The land tenure situation is reflected in the extent to which agrarian reforms have been carried out. Villages near haciendas have received ejidos, but the other villages have not, although agrarian conflicts also arose.

All the existing ejidos are of the individual type. In only one case (Tarajero) was collective exploitation attempted for some time. The people of Tarajero petitioned for land in 1915, and finally received it in 1924. It was good fertile land in a drained swamp, and, while part of former haciendas, the land had been used for commercial production. The agraristas decided to exploit it collectively. It seems, however, that the directing committee began to appropriate most of the profits derived from the exploitation, reducing the rest of the

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2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P.206] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro
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[661] ejidatarios to the level of underpaid laborers. ("The committee and its gang are living off the work of the rest of the people.") The upshot was that the ejidatarios managed to obtain from the government the abandonment of the cooperative exploitation and the distribution of the land into personal parcels. No further information is available.[67]

Ejidos were also granted on the southern shores of Lake Pátzcuaro. Here, ejidos were first established around 1920. Later on some were enlarged and new ones set up during the late 'thirties. Napízaro (originally granted 1936, enlarged 1938), Erongarícuaro (granted 1918, enlarged 1936), Uricho (granted 1920, actual possession given 1930, enlarged 1936), Santa Ana (1934), Tzurumútaro (granted 1921, possession given 1930, enlarged 1937), are among the main agrarista villages.[68] Other villages like Arócutin and Puácuaro have also agrarista groups but no information is available as to ejidos granted.

All these ejidos are individual. Lands are distributed to members by furrows, Tarascan style, and each individual lot is small (not more than 2 hectares). The tilling [241] of the land is done individually, although laborers are sometimes employed. The main crops are corn, wheat, and beans. [452] No credit has been received from the Bank of Ejido Credit. Woodlands are owned in common by the ejido. Its members can exploit them freely, but non-members have to pay a fee.[69]

In the Sierra and the Cañada towns there were no haciendas, and the granting of ejidos was not feasible. Only Tanaquillo in La Cañada had an ejido granted, in 1935.[70] In most villages, however, groups of peasants organized into agrarian committees in order to seize whatever lands [669] they could — communal lands or those belonging to the richer landowners. These revolutionary groups formed armed guards by means of which they seized and kept power in their villages.[71]

In some towns like those in La Cañada, 669 Charapan and Urapicho, a great number of 175 farmers had lost their lands to richer neighbors or to outsiders. Haciendas had not 423 been formed, but there were much absentee landownership and concentration of property. The people fought to get their lands back.[72]

67. Ibid., 477ff.
68. Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 288-93.
69. Ibid., 283-4.
70. Ibid., 283.
71. Ibid., 281; Báenz, 1938, 23.
72. For Urapicho, Beals, 1945, 131.

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P. 219] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro

175 In La Cañada the local revolt took place in 1918, led by people from Tanaquillo. The 423 lands which had fallen into the hands of 669 mestizos from Chilchota, Purépero and Tangancícuaro were recovered and distributed among the revolutionists. Only in 1932 was this reform legalized by the State government.[73] In other cases, medium farmers were the rule, and there is not a very great difference in property holdings. Nevertheless, agrarista groups were also organized. Most Sierra towns had groups of this sort.[74] Cherán and Jarácuaro, the two villages for which we have most information, belong to this type.

In these small towns, which legally had no ejidos, the agrarians took lands illegally either from richer villagers or from the communal lands. In all these villages where the majority of the people was not benefited, there was really a privileged group formed. The agraristas made themselves the only beneficiaries of the lands seized, or distributed them without satisfying the needs of other equally needy villagers who had not taken part in their movement.[75] When seizing lands to distribute among [661] themselves, they sometimes took land belonging to other villagers merely because they had been political enemies.[76] They also seized formerly communal lands for their exclusive use. Hence villagers not belonging to the agrarista group were obliged to pay a fee to the agrarian committee *(Comisario ejidal)* in order to have access to the lands.[77]

423 In Jarácuaro, for instance, the rush 664 grounds were formerly owned by the villagers, who used the proceeds from selling the rushes for buying candlewax for the temple; afterwards the agraristas exploited the grounds for their personal use. A similar case occurred during our stay on the island. A lowering of the lake's water level had left dry some flat land of considerable agricultural value. The agrarista group was trying to get the land from the federal government for distribution among its members, while the rest of the village wanted to distribute it among all the villagers (excepting the eight agraristas). At the time of our leaving (1945), the authorities were persuading the villagers to distribute the land among all people of both groups.

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73. Sáenz, 1936, 23-4; 96, 233-6; Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 301-2.
74. All but two, according to Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 280.
75. Sáenz, 1936, 256; also Tarejero, Simpson, 1937, 471-2.
76. Cañada, see Sáenz, 1936, 256; Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 281, 301-2.
77. Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 279, 281.

2;Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P.216] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro

423 661 A similar case was going on in Ihuatzio. Here an agrarista group was formed and was trying to obtain the new shore lands, which, according to traditional use, should be distributed among all the villagers.

The opposition of the Church to the Revolution and the fact that the financing of the cult had been one of the factors that led many peasants to lose their lands [798] brought about a strong anticlerical policy among the agraristas, who expelled the priest and forbade the cult, particularly the festivals. This connection of the agrarian movement with religion will be further discussed in the next chapter.

423 668 578 175 Thus, in a small farmer-owner environment a new privileged minority was formed, which seized the lands of political enemies or of the community, assumed control of the town administration, and attacked long cherished cultural values related to religion and the church. The agraristas kept power by armed force, being organized into a local militia. Except in towns where a great majority benefited from the changes, strong opposition was always evident. During the late 'twenties there were in the area some groups of *cristeros*.[78] Cristeros were anti-agrarian peasants in revolt against the government because of its anti-church policy. The main regions of the cristero movements were those where small farmers prevailed and consequently agrarismo was weak.[79]

The political conflict became so intensified that by 1939 the government had to send small detachments of federal troops to many towns.[80] The presence of these forces undermined the control of the agrarista militia. Shortly afterwards the agraristas were driven out of some towns, new authorities were established, and the cult was again allowed to function.

At the time of our field work (1945) this movement against the agraristas had become strongly influenced by the *sinarquistas*.

668 *Sinarquismo* is a political movement strongly Catholic and nationalistic, opposed to the government and with such traits as a semi-military organization, rallies, and a peculiar salute and flag. It won its initial strength in the late 'thirties in the Bajio region near the Tarascans and gained considerable mass support among the artisans and peasants. To the peasants it plays upon the failure of the government to improve their lot. While accusing the government

78. Foster, 1948, 178.
79. For instance, Arandas: Taylor, 1933, 30-32, 36-39.
80. Beals, 1946, 113; Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 289, 292.

571 largely in terms of the normal and special political functions of kinship, ceremonial kinship, and friendship. But the cacical association is more than the concatenation of these 66 social structures; it is a distinct political entity with its own patterns of action and its unique goal of power over the community.

Let us now turn to these distinctive workings of the cacicazgo. Political sovereignty 667 is exercised primarily by the cacique and his inner core of relatives and friends--eight men in all. They are more or less supported by some twenty lesser leaders. Political matters are informally discussed at length by the leaders and some of the citizens at large. Important policy decisions are made at special meetings, sometimes secretly convened, after a partial decision has been previously reached. Important legal cases are likewise resolved before the court opens by the inner core leaders, especially by the oldest nephew of the cacique. Political decisions at the special meetings are generally by majority vote, but often a majority of the inner eight is enough, and in extreme cases the cacique imposes his will alone. The matters dealt with in special meetings and conversations between the inner leaders are primarily the following: all land distribution questions, public works (especially irrigation problems), the making up of the ballots for formal office, and reprisals against enemies and the quashing of nascent interest groups. Effective government is informal, and a description solely in terms of formal political institutions would miss the main point of Durazno politics.

The informal structure of one cacical group in Durazno has always been paralleled by that of a contending or fallen party with its would-be cacique, secret meetings, and the same patterns of organization. At some times, as during 1927, the two parties have [62] been equal in strength. At other times, as in 1956, the fallen party has contained only an aging leader with a pathetic kinship nucleus and some twenty followers. Durazno, like villages all over Michoacan, has a normal pattern of two or more contending factions, each related independently and informally to other villages and higher structures.

186 The ethnic factor is often important here. During the agrarian period (1921-26), 578 Durazno and the two other agrarian Indian villages of the valley fought together against the mestizo hirelings and Spanish landlords. A major turning point in Durazno political 563 and cultural history came when opposing Indian factions within the village began using mestizo neighbors against their own "blood." The village agrarian caciques have themselves always been culturally marginal, participants in both Tarascan and mestizo culture. They feel a high ambivalence in both directions: partial rejection of their Indian followers, resentment toward mestizos, and different kinds of identification with both groups.

The village leaders, as political "middlemen" (Wolf, 1956), relate the political demands and supplies of their constituents to the partially complementary demands and supplies of the higher echelons, of the Cardenas machine in the case of Michoacan. In the case of two strong contending factions, both are separately related to two contesting state-wide structures, as during the "serratista" period from 1932 to 1934. The indigenous, factional structure of the village, with its qualities of an ongoing clan vendetta, is sensitively and immediately connected to national "theoretical" questions such as the "decollectivization of the ejidal patrimony" (1925). The national problems translate downward into specific blood-and-soil-issues.[3] The political relation between national structures and nerve-center villages like Durazno is constant and often direct; the Indian cacique goes straight to Mexico City to confer with the national party chairman.

632 The formal government in Durazno is divided between the civil and ejidal arms. The 661 three civil officers enjoy slightly more prestige and pervasive power in the community organization and the arbitration of legal cases, while the four ejidal posts are the more

coveted because of the higher financial rewards. The nominal pay in both cases is supplemented by bribes and "cuts" from taxes, and by the ego satisfactions of exercising power. Elections take place by public vote every one and three years, respectively, following the informal composition of ballots and considerable discussion at open meetings. High public attendance at these meetings is due both to genuine interest and to fear of persecution if the cacical group should suspect boycotting. Although the duties are formally allotted to specific officers, such as a judge, the officers of both governmental arms actually operate as a group, rather flexibly playing the several roles. In 1956, for example, the civil secretary also functioned at times as judge and mayor.

Both the formal arms of government are controlled by the informal cacicazgo. Today, the preplanned ballot is always finally accepted at the public meetings. Under conditions of centralized autocracy, at least one officer in both the civil and ejidal arms is an inner core leader, and when political troubles are anticipated two offices in each branch may be filled by such nuclear individuals. In the heated election year of 1956, for example, the civil secretary, the ejidal president, and the president of the ejidal watch were nephews of the cacique; the cacique himself was ejidal treasurer, and an old "fighter" and friend of the cacique was judge.

Cacical systems, however, swing between the two extremes of autocratic centralization and contentious fission. When the historical process of contentious fission between the energetic "ex-have-nots" of agrarian politics reaches its extreme, both factions may offer ballots for both branches of government. They will be hotly contended in a variety of ways. The result may be that both factions are represented, as in 1927, or that one faction controls the ejido and another the civil government, as in 1945. Such formal reflexes of a breakdown of informal hegemony are invariably accompanied by a so-called "bad time," with attempts on the lives of the caciques of both factions. Cacical patterns thus rend communities and at other times provide a highly political integration, both in the name of a social and material progress that may actually take shape in the form of schools and public works. The extremes of contentious fission and autocratic centralization do not seem to be correlated with the degree of formal collectivization of the ejido, although such institutional collectivization does make it easier to exercise dictatorial powers and to extract larger financial cuts. On the other hand, the importance of centralized control for continued drainage of the ejido legitimizes the term "hydraulic caciques" (Wittfogel, 1957).

Both formal governments of Durazno are independently related upward to higher, formal structures. Durazno leaders have occupied numerous formal positions at higher levels owing to the salient informal role of the tiny pueblo in the intrigue, violence, and heartfelt radicalism of Michoacan politics. Politics and the cultivation of political leaders have in fact become a sort of communal specialty in Durazno. Durazno caciques founded and held numerous offices in the state-wide peasant League of Agrarian Communities; they have been municipal presidents three times, state congressmen three times, and, once, substitute to a national congressman. They have always formally controlled the important "Regional Committee," the regional organ of the National Peasant Confederation. While highly atypical with respect to this prominence, Durazno does exemplify the role that tough, sophisticated, and land-controlling Indian caciques can play in regional and state politics. As the people say, "Some towns specialize in hat-making, others in pottery. Durazno specializes in politics."

Primarily four political methods have been used by the caciques and their followers for the past forty years. The first, verbal persuasion, takes place in small informal groups and at the frequent political meetings; by comparison with other villages Durazno is a beehive of political discussions. Verbal persuasion figured especially during the

stormy agrarian period (1921-26), when the agrarian hero was, by word of mouth, "touching the sensitive parts" of the Tarascan peasantry.

The second method, astute intrigue, follows fairly familiar Machiavellian lines but with a self-conscious sophistication and articulateness that would have delighted the immortal Florentine (Machiavelli, 1942). Intrigue has always been a major, time-consuming political activity in Durazno, and astuteness (astucia) is a personal quality much admired by the cunning leaders. It is true that politics is often infused by the characteristic desperation of peasants struggling for land with a newly activated lust for power; old agrarian fighters recall that after the land reform in 1924 they felt like the "recently arrived." But Durazno politics also has the character for its participants of a fascinating game to be played astutely, in accordance with certain rules and a high sense of art.

The third principal method, human organization, received great impetus during the twenties through the formation of regional committees and of "shock brigades," organized on Leninist principles. Leaders today conceive of their role as one of "organizing" and "controlling" the pueblo and the region. The cacique maintains a high threshhold of internal discipline, but the relations between the other leaders are horizontal, loose, and shifting. The importance of relations with higher organizations has already been described.

The fourth method, the "diagnostic trait" of violence, assumed the stature of a civil war during the agrarian period when indigenous patterns of blood vengeance and friendship loyalty combined with the ideological justifications of the reform struggle. During the twenty-year factional period from 1926 to 1948, Durazno and the region attained a unique notoriety in the state. Twenty-three cross-checked politically motivated homicides and several times more woundings and armed encounters took place in the three "bad years" from 1937 to 1939 alone. Leaders and ordinary citizens recognize violence as a normal aspect of politics, but today many are sick of it, and the incidence has greatly dropped. Assassinations are usually carried out by the more "valiant" members of a party and are generally directed against the minor figures of opposing parties. The number of active or potential peasant "fighters" in Durazno has always ranged between ten and forty and has been a significant power factor in region and state. The power basis of politics is a comparatively obvious factor here.

Much of what we have said here would apply to other forms of caciquismo, including larger, non-Indian, conservative areas, such as Spain. In the Boasian spirit, however, we have limited our inductions to one Mexican Indian cacicazgo. In 1896 Franz Boas wrote: "When we have cleared up the history of a single culture . . . we can then investigate in how far the same causes were at work in the development of other cultures."

NOTES

1. Fourteen months of fieldwork were conducted between March, 1955, and July, 1956, under the auspices of the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Mexican government.

2. Nonparticipants have illegally rented their plots, or are boycotting the cacique, or have withdrawn from politics from fear or weariness.

3. Leaders of opposition factions in the village stand ready to switch and offer a revolutionizing support to a leader who challenges a state or national machine. This automatic village-level support of an opposition leader partially explains the cataclysmic success of Lazaro Cardenas when, in 1934, he turned against national "strong man" Calles.